

Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel claims 1-6

Please add new claims 14-21 as shown below.

Listing of Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-13. (Cancelled)

14. (New) A method of operating a computer network search apparatus for generating a result list of items representing a match with information entered by a user through an input device connected to the computer network, the search apparatus comprising a computer system operatively connected to the computer network and the method comprising:

storing a plurality of items in a database, each item including information to be communicated to a user and having associated with it at least one keyword, an information provider and a bid amount;

receiving a keyword entered by a user through an input device;

searching the stored items and identifying items representing a match with the keyword entered by the user;

ordering the identified items in a result list using the bid amounts for the identified items, the identified items being ordered in the result list in a randomized order weighted by bid amounts for the identified items; and

providing the result list to the user.

15. (New) The method of claim 14 further comprising:

selecting a first identified item for a first-displayed location in the result list according to a bid amount-weighted random drawing, leaving remaining identified items; and

repetitively selecting a next identified item for a next-displayed location in the result list according to a bid amount-weighted random drawing among the remaining identified items until the result list is populated.

16. (New) The method of claim 14, wherein the identified items are arranged in the result list in a random order weighed by the bid amount associated with each respective identified item, the influence of the bid amount being controlled by one or more predetermined parameters.

17. (New) A method for providing a search result list, the method comprising:
receiving a search request from a searcher;

in a database of search listings, each search listing being associated with an advertiser and including at least one search term and a bid amount modifiably bid by the advertiser, identifying search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

selecting according to bid amount no more than a predetermined number of identified search listings for display to the searcher;

arranging as the search result list the identified search listings for display in a random order weighted according to the bid amount associated with each respective identified search listing, including

for each identified search listing, comparing the bid amount for the each search listing with a value weighted by a random number,

if the bid amount for the identified search listing does not exceed the value weighted by the random number, moving the identified search listing to the search result list; and

communicating the search result list to the searcher.

18. (New) The method of claim 17 further comprising:

combining the bid amount for the each identified search listing with a bid amount for another identified search listing;

comparing the combined bid amounts to a product of the value and the random number;

if the bid amount for the identified search listing does not exceed the product of the value and the random number, subtracting the bid amount for the other search listing from the value.

19. (New) The method of claim 18 wherein the value comprises a sum of the bid amounts of the selected search listings.

20. (New) A method for providing a search result list, the method comprising:
receiving a search request from a searcher;

in a database of search listings, each search listing being associated with an advertiser and including at least one search term and a bid amount modifiably bid by the advertiser, identifying search listings having search terms generating a match with the search request;

selecting according to bid amount no more than a predetermined number of identified search listings for display to the searcher;

arranging as the search result list the identified search listings for display, including

(a) for each selected search listing, determining a sorting variable T , where $T = Q^{-S}$, where Q is equal to the number of selected search listings and S is a predefined display parameter;

(b) comparing the sorting variable to a random number;

(c) if the sorting variable exceeds the random number, moving the each selected search listing to the search result list, otherwise

(d) modifying the value of Q and determining the sorting variable,

(e) repeating (a), (b) (c), and (d) until the sorting variable exceeds the random number; and

communicating the search result list to the searcher.

21. The method of claim 20 further comprising
setting the display parameter S to a value selected for arranging the selected
search results in a random order.

22. The method of claim 20 comprising setting the display parameter S to a
value of 1.